

**World Cities, Translocality and Gender in Financial Service Economies:  
Women Professionals and Changing Chinese Lives in China, Hong Kong and  
Australia**

**Wai-wan Chan (陳惠雲)**

School of International Studies  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
University of Technology Sydney  
Australia

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## **Certificate of Original Authorship**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

Date: 18 January 2017

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- (2) Chan Wai-wan 2014, "Career Mobility and Structural Barriers: Women Bankers in Hong Kong" (香港女性银行家的职业流动与结构性障碍), *Studies on Hong Kong and Macao* 《當代港澳研究》, Vol.4: 133-156. (China Social Sciences Academic Press 中社会科学文献出版社).
- (3) Chan Wai-wan 2014, "The Career Mobility of Women Managers in International Banks in Hong Kong" (初探香港銀行女性中高級管理人員的職業發展), *Hong Kong and Macau Affairs*, Issue 17: 32-37.

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## Abstract

Women are emerging as significant actors in international financial industries concentrated in world and global cities. This study explores the feminisation of mid-level management teams in world and global cities in the Asia-Pacific. It draws on 51 in-depth interviews with Chinese women professionals working in the financial industry in Sydney, Hong Kong, Shanghai and four other cities in Australia and China. Using intersectionality analysis, it examines the interplay between geographical location, gender and career mobility.

This study has four key findings. First, a bank's location is embedded within hierarchical fields of power. There are spatial politics within a city, among different cities and across nations, which interweave with the politics of race, ethnicity and gender as urban economies respond to increasing numbers of immigrants. Particular areas within a city exert the power of spatial coding while the level of development and real and symbolic political power differs among cities. These factors impact the upward mobility of women professionals.

Second, 'seeing face' and 'giving face' are correlated to building trust and maintaining a 'personalised relationship' in Chinese business culture. Hence, global financial capitalism requires professionals to maintain a high frequency of local and international travel. Upwardly mobile Chinese women professionals play a key role in shaping the daily practise of transnationalism and in building and maintaining dynamic global-to-local and local-to-local connectivity.

Third, women professionals are adept at performing gender: they perform the role of a 'nü hanzi' (女汉子 tough lady) to build a 'code of brotherhood' with male clients and bosses; and they also use charismatic womanhood and heterosexual attraction both in business dealings and in the office. Ironically, women professionals often face discrimination from other women. Their own misogynistic gendered perception of female bosses reflects a 'crab-pot mentality' which has a negative impact on the limited opportunities for women to move into top managerial positions.

Finally, the thesis reveals three place-based coping strategies: (1) cooperation between husband and wife who use gender role flexibility and exchangeability to divide labour at home, in Australia; (2) cooperation between women professionals and live-in, female, domestic helpers to do housework and child care, in Hong Kong; and (3) vertical cooperation between mothers and daughters, where a professional's mother becomes the key care giver to young children, in mainland China. The comparative analysis of challenges and coping strategies reveal an intricate and complex lineage between coping strategies, state policy, an individual's resources and place-based culture and norms.